



**International
Journal of Society, Culture & Language
IJSCL**

Journal homepage: www.ijsccl.net
ISSN 2323-2210 (online)

Teachers' Curricular Knowledge in Teacher Education Programs: A Case of Iran's Sociocultural Context

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ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received November 2020
Received in Revised form January 2021
Accepted February 2021
Available online March 2021

KEYWORDS:

Knowledge base
Curricular knowledge
Teacher education programs
Pre-service teacher education programs
In-service teacher education programs

Abstract

Teacher education programs can pursue the aim of helping teachers acquire the knowledge base for effective teaching. However, the representation of curricular knowledge, one of the important dimensions of the teacher knowledge base, varies across educational and sociocultural contexts. As this knowledge has rarely been explored in the context of Iran, the current study sought to analyze the contents of teacher education programs to identify the representation of curricular knowledge. For this aim, the programs of 15 English language institutes were analyzed using a checklist developed based on Roberts' (1998) model. Totally, 12 general categories, including 59 components, were found in pre-service programs; however, only 4 categories and 12 components were related to curricular knowledge, namely Methodology and instruction, Planning lessons, Materials, and Assessment. Regarding in-service programs, it was found that curricular knowledge was embodied only in two programs. The findings can provide insights to teacher educations for designing more effective teacher education programs that enhance teachers' curricular knowledge.

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1. Introduction

School culture is one of the leading factors influencing academic expectations, school satisfaction, and academic performance (McCullum & Yader, 2011). School culture refers to a set of beliefs that are shared and widely endorsed by a particular educational community (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Rauf, Ali, Aluwi, & Noor, 2018). A teacher education program may reflect these beliefs about the requisite knowledge base of teachers and present a large picture of the nature and position of English education in an institute. It may also show the way institutes set their standards and highlight their focal points about teacher education, i.e., what they expect their teachers to master and produce (Sakhiyya, Agustien, & Pratama, 2018). The content of second language teacher education (SLTE) reflects the knowledge base (i.e., what teachers need to know) and influences the way the teachers learn and teach. In addition, the sociocultural contexts in which the teachers work affect the ways they teach (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Knowledge base, in second language teaching, refers to the required expertise, understanding, awareness, knowledge, and skills for second-language teachers to be effective teachers (Tedick, 2005). In the same line, Janssen (2014, 2019) described the knowledge base as what teachers know and what they are supposed to know and considered it crucial for teachers to have satisfactory knowledge to carry on teaching practices. Several researchers have attempted to outline what content should be included in an SLTE program (e.g., Nguyen, 2013).

One of the main components of the teacher knowledge base is curricular knowledge (Christie, 2012; Schleppegrell & Christie, 2018), which, according to Shulman (1987), has three dimensions: (a) alternative curricular knowledge, i.e., knowledge of supplemental materials for instructing a subject; (b) lateral curricular knowledge, meaning teachers' ability to connect the content of a specific subject with other subjects studied by students; and (c) vertical curricular knowledge, defined as teachers' familiarity with the topics that were and will be taught in preceding and following years. Curricular knowledge also implies teachers' awareness of teaching

materials and of the nature of examinations (Roberts, 1998). Abell (2008) defined curricular knowledge as the organization, delivery, and modification of the contents of the curriculum, teaching subjects, problems, and issues related to the interests and abilities of the pupils. Nonetheless, due to constant changes in curricula, teachers cannot be equipped with essential instruction through education; consequently, teacher education programs are important in the development of knowledge used for solving practical problems. Although curricular knowledge is an essential component of teachers' knowledge base, there is no consensus on the knowledge base for language teacher education and its components (Ong'ondo, 2017). Furthermore, only a few studies have been conducted on evaluating EFL teacher education programs (Agudo & de Dios, 2017; Akcan, 2016; Karim, Shahed, Mohamed, Rahman, & Ismail, 2019). Therefore, to provide insights into teachers' curricular knowledge, this study aimed to explore the contents of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, based on Roberts' model (1998), to identify which aspects of curricular knowledge were covered in these programs.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Language Teachers' Curricular Knowledge

Conceptualizations of the domain and the essence of curricular knowledge have been proposed by different researchers. Curricular knowledge, for Carlson and Daehler (2019), refers to teachers' familiarity with arranging lessons in a way to improve students' understanding, their awareness of types of assessment, and their skills for effective teaching. Similarly, Şen, Öztekin, and Demirdöğen (2018) believe that curricular knowledge includes teachers' understanding of the objectives in the curriculum, their familiarity with the topics they teach, and their knowledge of students' understandings to recognize the problems their students may encounter. They consider curricular knowledge as teachers' cognizance of specific curricular programs about the topic they teach.

Knowledge of the curricula and training teachers to interpret them, as noted by Tomašević and Trivić (2015), are important elements of teachers' knowledge and are

emphasized in different models proposed for teachers' knowledge. According to Faisal (2014), curricular knowledge targets teachers' understanding of what the content and aims of the curriculum are, and what the learners at different levels are supposed to learn at different levels. Teachers are equipped with experiences, characteristics, beliefs, knowledge, and skills that facilitate a better understanding of the contents of curriculum materials. If the teachers are unable to analyze curriculum materials, they would either make unnecessary changes or fail to make needed modifications. Consequently, they should learn how to adapt curriculum materials (Beyer & Davis, 2012).

Curricular knowledge, as Roberts (1998) argues, includes teachers' cognizance of available materials and their genres, of the connection between the curricula and contextual variations (i.e., learners' needs and culture), of the type and purpose of a text, and of the nature of the examination. He also emphasized the teachers' ability to develop lesson plans and to critically evaluate and interpret textbooks and test results.

2.2. Language Teacher Education and Teacher Curricular Knowledge

Knowledge base, according to Shulman (1987), refers to teachers' ability to manage their classrooms, prepare lesson plans, and provide students with clear explanations, among others. As such, teacher education programs play an important role in the development of suitable teaching skills (Anbesie, 2020). Curricular knowledge, as Carlson and Daehler (2019) have conceptualized it, includes teachers' knowledge of how to arrange lessons to improve students' understanding. They suggest that teachers should be attentive to the nature of the curriculum, be familiar with different types of assessment, and possess an array of skills and strategies for effective teaching. These educational knowledge bases are developed formal channels, such as teacher preparation programs, and then are reinforced through teaching experiences and professional learning activities.

Roberts (1998) also put emphasis on teachers' ability to cover the textbook within a fixed time schedule. He believed that teachers should transfer the curriculum, and teacher education programs should help them acquire

the required competencies for teaching. For him, language curriculum takes learners' needs into consideration; therefore, teachers are required to identify problems, adjust materials, and design learning activities. He argued that teacher education programs should enhance teachers' skills, for example, of materials development and evaluation, and support independent and context-sensitive decision-making.

Understanding the complexity of teachers' knowledge base provides great insights into language teachers' activity and gives useful insights for applying policies in teachers' professional development programs (Valencia, 2009). Assisting teachers to get ready for a real teaching environment has always been emphasized and considered as a valuable aim in the history of teacher education programs' professional development (Akarsu & Kaya, 2012). Language teachers should be familiar with new methods and techniques in teaching and be efficacious in adapting the new trends and use them in their classes. In fact, students' success depends on the success of their teachers, and the success of teachers depends on qualified language teacher education programs (Altmisdort, 2016). Agudo and de Dios (2017) maintained that due to the prominence and crucial role of English in today's globalized world, there has been much emphasis on training highly qualified and competent language teachers, and this further underlines the significance of EFL teacher education programs. In-service programs, according to Shin and Kang (2017), should certainly offer the basics for the professional needs that teachers face in their classes. Moreover, these programs should provide teachers, especially novice teachers, with in-field experiences in order to equip them with various opportunities and enhance their abilities to apply their developing skills and knowledge while teaching their students (Swanson & Mason, 2018).

Curricular knowledge base, as one of the components of the teachers' knowledge base, has been emphasized in studies on teacher education, yet there is scant research investigating the components of teacher education programs focused on curricular knowledge in English language institutes in Iran. Although curriculum documents do not

fully present the cultural responsiveness (Flores, 2016), they can be considered as a “window” displaying the values and knowledge that are important for institutes. Furthermore, they reveal linguistic as well as political and ideological processes behind their development. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the contents of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs in 15 English language institutes across different cities based on Roberts' (1998) model to identify the components of curricular knowledge covered in these programs. Consequently, the following research question was addressed in this study: How do pre-service and in-service teacher education programs in language institutes in Iran reflect the curricular components of the EFL teachers' knowledge base?

3. Methodology

3.1. Teacher Education Program Documents

This study investigated the contents of pre-service and in-service language education programs to find out which aspect(s) of the curricular knowledge base they focused on. The documents were from teacher education programs offered in 15 well-known institutes across the country.

The first author went to a number of institutes and told the institute managers about the aim of the study. Some of the managers were reluctant to provide her with their teacher education programs as they considered them as confidential documents of their institutes and did not want to disseminate their contents. However, she convinced them that their teacher education programs would be used merely for research purposes, and in some cases, she had to sign a letter indicating that the programs would not be used for other purposes than educational ones, nor would they be disseminated to other institutes. As for other institutes across the country, the first author contacted the institute managers through social media, e-mails, and phone calls, and the same procedure was followed to obtain their programs. However, some institutes did not cooperate and refrained from delivering their programs.

3.2. Document Analysis

Teacher education programs, both pre-service and in-service programs, were initially

explored to extract the categories and the components they focused on in training teachers. In the next step, the components and categories were compared with the components of curricular knowledge characterized by Roberts (1998) to highlight the components pertinent to teachers' curricular knowledge.

To gain insight into the curriculum of English language institutes and to find out their focus in teaching programs, the pre-service and in-service teacher education programs of 15 well-known institutes across Iran were reviewed. The purpose was to get a better understanding of their focal point and to identify which components of teachers' curricular knowledge base were emphasized. The documents were thoroughly analyzed, and all components taught during pre- and in-service programs were extracted and recorded by the researcher on a checklist. In the next step, the programs were checked again to identify if any sessions were devoted to language teachers' curricular knowledge based on Roberts' (1998) model.

4. Results

In this section, the results obtained from the analysis of pre- and in-service teacher education programs are presented.

4.1. Pre-service Teacher Education Programs

To answer the research question, pre-service teacher education programs of 15 English language institutes in Iran were scrutinized, and all the components were extracted and written on a checklist. It was found that the time allocated to these programs by institutes (Table 1) varied from 12 to 60 hours within different sessions. As it can be seen, two institutes, namely, institutes A and C, with 60 hours of teaching, are in the first-place rank. The former covered the program in 18 days and the latter in 4 weeks, 20 sessions. Institute B, with 50 hours of training in 10 sessions, is in the third-place rank, and the fourth place is obtained by institute M with 40 hours of the teaching training program. Other institutes, including institutes G and I, are located in the fifth-place rank. They covered their teaching programs in 22 sessions, which make up 33 hours of teaching. Institutes D, F, H, K, and L, with 30 hours of teaching, stand in the next rank. As the table shows, institute N, with the smallest number of training hours, that is to say, 12 hours, stands in the last-place rank.

Learners & learner variables	Teacher language				*	*	*	*									
	Teacher development	*	*	*			*			*							*
	Different learners	*		*			*										
	Learner-centeredness					*		*	*								
	Learners' goals						*										
	Learners' expectations						*										
	Learners' purposes						*										
	Learner-teacher relationship				*	*											
	Learning strategies/ styles				*			*									
	Multiple intelligences						*	*									
Learner autonomy						*	*										
Assessment	Testing & evaluation	*	*	*		*	*		*	*		*	*		*		*
	Material evaluation			*													
	Using authentic materials			*													
Materials	Adapting materials			*					*		*						
	Integrating materials	*															
	Designing materials				*								*				
	Choosing materials	*	*				*		*		*						
Teacher language awareness	Textbook evaluation																*
	Language awareness (form, meaning, function)		*	*			*	*	*								

According to Table 4, two categories, Orientation sessions, and Technology-assisted teaching were addressed only in two institutes. The category of Introduction to the course consists of three components, two of which were considered merely in one institute and

another one, Defining aims, was covered in six institutes. In general, the results show that these categories, compared with the others, gained the least coverage in teacher education programs.

Table 4
Categories of Orientation, Introduction, and Technology in Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs in Language Institutes (Named as A, B, C, etc.)

Categories	Components	English Language Institutes															
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	
Orientation session	Organizational behavior	*															
	Administrative issues		*														
	Course orientation		*														
Introduction to the course	Defining aims	*	*	*		*	*				*						
	Introduction to the course book										*						
Technology-assisted teaching	Use of technology			*							*						

Based on the analysis of the documents, some components were more emphasized in some institutes but not in the other ones. For example, the component Lesson planning, falling within the category of Planning lessons, got the first-place rank among 59 components and was considered in pre-service teacher education programs of 11 institutes.

The second-place rank was commonly obtained by Motivation and Classroom organization components from the category of Classroom management category and Teaching Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing, and Vocabulary from the category of Language skills and components. Each of these components was covered by 10 institutes. The third-place rank belonged to the component Teaching grammar, part of the category of Language skills and components, which was addressed by nine institutes. Methodology and Error correction components (from the Methodology and instruction category), Teaching phonetics (from the Language skills and components category), and the Testing and evaluation component (from the Assessment category) got the fourth-rank and were included by eight institutes.

It was also found that only seven components, among 59, were incorporated in the teacher education programs of 10 institutes. They included Motivation, Organizing activities,

Teaching listening, reading, speaking, writing, and vocabulary. Only one component, Lesson planning, was taught in 11 institutes. Moreover, 51 components, such as Material evaluation, Learner autonomy, and Teacher development, were covered in one to nine institutes. Methodology, Error correction, Teaching phonetics, and Testing and evaluation were addressed in eight and Teaching grammar in nine institutes. Among the institutes, it was found that one institute ranked first as it included 33 components among 59 in its pre-service teacher education program. Another institute with 27 components ranked second, and still another with 24 components ranked third. Five institutes covered 23, 22, 22, 21, and 20 components in their pre-service teaching education programs, while seven institutes included a range of 1 to 11 components in their programs.

Since the purpose of the study was to compare teacher education programs against Roberts' (1998) model, the related categories and components included in pre-service teacher education programs were extracted and analyzed (Table 5). As it is demonstrated in the table, only 4 categories (Planning lessons, Methodology and instruction, Assessment, and Materials) with their 12 components covered in the institutes were related to the curricular knowledge model proposed by Roberts.

Table 5
Categories of Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs Based on Roberts' (1998) Model

Categories	Components	English Language Institutes														
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Planning lessons	Syllabus design										*					
	Classroom lesson plans		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*		*	
	Integrative planning	*														
Methodology & instruction	Methodology				*		*		*		*	*	*	*		*
Assessment	Testing & evaluation		*	*	*		*	*		*	*		*		*	
	Material evaluation				*											
	Using authentic materials				*											
	Adapting materials				*				*		*					
Materials	Integrating materials	*														
	Designing materials					*					*					
	Choosing materials		*	*					*		*					
	Textbook evaluation										*					

Among the categories, the first-place rank belonged to Planning lessons as one of its three components; in other words, Classroom lesson plans, an essential component of curricular knowledge, encompassed in 11 institutes' programs. This refers to the crucial importance of this component as a valuable skill for beginning teachers. However, Syllabus design and Integrative planning of the same category were each taught in one institute. As presented in Table 5, the categories of Methodology and instruction and Assessment were both addressed in eight institutes, indicating the significant status of these skills in teacher education programs. It was also observed that the category titled Materials, another important part of curricular knowledge with seven components, was reflected in the teacher education programs of 1-4 institutes.

4.2. In-service Teacher Education Programs

After the analysis of pre-service teacher

education programs, the contents of in-service programs were also analyzed. The results obtained at this stage are summarized in Table 6, according to which only two institutes deemed in-service teacher education programs necessary; however, they did not provide comprehensive coverage of curricular knowledge in pre-service programs. The in-service programs in these institutes consisted of four categories, namely Methodology and instruction, Classroom management, Assessment, and Language skills and components. As demonstrated in the table, the first three categories and two components of the fourth category, namely Teaching vocabulary and Teaching grammar, were addressed in institute H, while Language skills and components with all its constituents were taught in institute I. These findings reveal that these institutes differed in their emphasis on the required teaching skills to be reinforced through in-service programs.

Table 6
Categories of In-Service Teacher Education Programs

Categories	Components	Institutes	
		H	I
Methodology & instruction	Methodology	*	
Classroom management	Classroom organization	*	
Assessment	Testing & evaluation	*	
	Teaching vocabulary	*	*
	Teaching grammar	*	*
Language skills & components	Teaching listening		*
	Teaching Reading		*
	Teaching Speaking		*
	Teaching Writing		*

In the next step, the in-service programs were compared against Roberts' (1998) model to explore the categories related to curricular knowledge. As it is revealed in Table 7, only two categories of teachers' curricular knowledge, that is to say, Methodology and instruction and Assessment were found to be included in only one institute's program. It indicates that this

institute supports the idea that language teachers should understand the significance of these components and that their teachers should be helped to improve their teaching skills and their awareness of both the latest trends in teaching and of the value of continuous assessment of learners as a mainstay of classroom teaching.

Table 7
Categories of In-Service Teacher Education Programs Based on Roberts' (1998) Model

Categories	Components	Institute
		H
Methodology & instruction	Methodology	*
Assessment	Testing & evaluation	*

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyze both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs as they reflect the dominant educational and sociocultural beliefs about preparing teachers and their professionalism. All components of these programs were extracted, and those specific components pertinent to teachers' curricular knowledge based on Roberts' (1998) model were highlighted. In the first step, all components of pre-service education programs were carefully scrutinized. The analysis of the documents confirmed the inclusion of 59 components of the knowledge base in language institutes' teacher education programs. This indicates that institute managers recognize the prominence of teacher education programs in developing teachers' knowledge regarding Theories of teaching and learning, Syllabus design, Lesson planning, Materials evaluation, and Assessment, among others. However, since the study sought to probe the components of the curricular knowledge base, the contents of teacher education programs were reviewed again with respect to the components of curricular knowledge included in Roberts' model. The analysis demonstrated that among the total 12 categories covered by the institutes, only four categories were related to curricular knowledge, including Assessment, Planning lessons, Material, and Methodology and instruction. This substantiates Boz and Belge-Can's (2020) argument that both theoretical knowledge regarding different instructional methods and strategies and the chance to apply them in the classroom should be provided to pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. It was also interesting to find that Lesson planning was the only component considered in 11 among 15 institutes. This finding is consistent with Savage's (2014) statement that the teachers' process of thinking is reflected in their lesson plans, that is, the way they plan teaching to their students. Likewise, Kim and Bolger

(2016) found that pre-service teachers consulted diverse guidebooks and textbooks to create their lesson plans. This finding also lends support to Chizhik and Chizhik's (2018) emphasis on teachers' roles in preparing lesson plans, which enable teachers to better design instructional activities that satisfy students' learning needs.

The analysis of the programs documented that two other components, that is Methodology and Testing and evaluation, were both addressed in eight institutes. This implies that the institutes in this study also perceived the importance of these components as necessary and effective elements in the development of teachers' curricular knowledge. In the same vein, Duff and Lester (2008) considered assessment and methodology as important components of language teacher education programs and believed that pre-service teacher education programs should offer more language assessment training. This result is broadly in line with Scarino's (2013) statement that teachers should be proficient in language classroom assessment, should master learning theories and use them in the assessment process, should be able to match assessment with language teaching approaches, and should be familiar with underlying problems in assessment. Giraldo (2018) proposed a list consisting of 66 essential components for language teachers. Based on the list, the teachers should be able to distinguish the main purposes of language testing, be familiar with major steps in developing tests, and use language assessment methods appropriately. The results are in accord with Utami's (2019) belief that the evaluation of instructional materials is an important part of the educational process because they can serve as a self-study source for learners.

However, not all the institutes covered categories related to curricular knowledge, or if they did, they included a limited number of

components. It shows that apart from a few components, the institutes were not adequately aware of other components of curricular knowledge. In fact, most components of the category like Materials were addressed only in one or two institutes. It means that the teachers attending these programs were deprived of the opportunity to get acquainted with materials and their contents. Consequently, they couldn't achieve an appropriate level of curricular knowledge because, according to Roberts (1998), teachers' abilities to perceive the design of textbook materials, to prepare and assess classroom materials, and to adapt existing materials to meet the needs of particular groups of learners are all indicative of the existence of curricular knowledge.

In the next step, the contents of in-service teacher education programs were explored. It was observed that only two institutes provided written syllabus for their in-service teacher education programs, which were not as comprehensive as they should have been. The programs included four categories: Methodology and instruction, Classroom management, Language skills and components, and Assessment. However, with regard to the components of curricular knowledge, it was realized that only two categories, namely Methodology and Assessment, were covered in only one institute. Whereas Carlson and Daehler (2019) emphasized the teachers' knowledge of the nature of different types of assessments and Roberts (1998) asserted that curricular knowledge entails teachers' awareness of teaching materials, the nature of examinations, and teachers' ability to interpret test results as valuable data used for subsequent teaching.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the institutes mostly pay more attention to pre-service education programs, and in-service teacher education programs do not get proper attention as they should in many institutes. In other words, institute managers and teacher educators do not have a clear perception of the necessity of in-service programs despite their importance (Rosenfield & Berninger, 2009). In the same line, Rosenfield and Berninger believed that although teachers at the pre-service level should be informed of the results of the studies on educational practice before they actually engage in teaching and encounter

classroom realities, it is not sufficient, and continued professional development are needed to help them. As they argue, pre- and in-service professional development should take students, teachers, and curriculum into consideration and enable teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs.

Although EFL teacher education programs have a prominent role in training competent teachers, a small number of studies have been carried out to evaluate these programs (Agudo & de Dios, 2017; Akcan, 2016). The components of EFL teacher education programs offered in 15 well-known English language institutes in Iran were scrutinized to identify the extent to which they represent the components of curricular knowledge and specify areas that require further improvement or revision. The differences in the contents of the programs stem from the dominant culture and sociocultural norms and values governing the institutes. As such, organizational culture at the school and institute level, the role of managers, and the role of external agencies at local and regional levels are all critical to the success of teacher development (Fullan, 1987, as cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

The findings showed that the teachers had to follow a pre-established body of teaching knowledge presented by teacher trainers. This is in line with the findings from a study by Pishghadam and Saboori (2014), who found that the educational system in Iran to be highly centralized. The allocated time for in-service education programs greatly varied in institutes. Although the institutes mostly have pre-service education programs and adequately cover components, such as Classroom management and Language skills and components, the components pertinent to curricular knowledge are identified as weak. In-service education programs do not sufficiently embody curricular knowledge, the development of which, according to Robertson (2018) can support novice instructors to be more flexible in their teaching. Therefore, it can be concluded that the inclusion of more components of curricular knowledge can be beneficial to the teachers and would help them gain new insights into the curriculum and its components. That is, they would be able to better monitor their classes, give more effective instructions and feedback, get

familiar with material evaluation, and adapt and design better materials that are all among the components of curricular knowledge. It is through the curriculum, as pointed out by Tomašević and Trivić (2015), that teachers can prioritize teaching topics and adjust the contents of materials to the diverse interests and abilities of learners. However, due to continual changes in curricula, teachers cannot get all the necessary instructions for their professional careers; therefore, there is a need to consider the efficacious influence of teacher education on teachers and their teaching. In general, language institutes place more emphasis on other components of the knowledge base than curricular knowledge. Institutes should be concerned with standardizing the components of their teacher education programs and pay more attention to curricular knowledge to bridge the existing gaps in their programs.

This study was conducted on a small number of institutes; however, its findings may have implications for English language institutes and for teacher educators. Due to the importance of teachers' curricular knowledge for effective teaching, institutes managers and teacher educators should pay more attention to it and include more components than what is currently included in their teacher education programs. These programs can aid pre-service teachers in enhancing their awareness and teaching effectiveness (Ranjbari, Heidari Tabrizi, & Afghari, 2020).

The acquisition of curricular knowledge should not be merely limited to pre-service programs, but it should also be incorporated into in-service teacher education for continual professional development (Tomašević & Trivić, 2015). Consequently, language institutes and teacher educators should pay close attention to curricular knowledge and its underlying components in teacher education courses, tailor the content of their program to teachers' teaching needs for this knowledge, and arrange seminars and meetings during which teachers can exchange their perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, in-service teacher education programs are of great value and deserve attention. Institute managers and teacher educators should also consider in-service programs since pre-service teacher education may not per se be enough for EFL

teachers; as a consequence, institutes should consider teachers' professional development through in-service teacher education. It should be noted that the gap between pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teacher development leads to attrition, and teachers would encounter serious problems in their classes (Faez & Valeo, 2012; Farrell, 2012). The findings can draw the attention of institute managers and teacher educators to the content of their teacher education programs and would help them gain new insight into education programs. As stated by Peacock (2009), teacher education programs can be constantly revised by means of continuous assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and ample space can be given to components pertinent to curricular knowledge. Taken together, these findings indicate an essential role for teacher education programs, both pre-service or in-service programs, in educating teachers.

Teachers, the novice ones in particular, as Swanson and Mason (2018) emphasized, should be encouraged to engage with teachers' associations at local or national levels in order to build a support network before entering the field of teaching. Despite these limitations, we believe that this study could be a starting point for other studies on the role of teacher education programs in educating knowledgeable teachers. These results offer compelling evidence for redesigning teacher education programs in a way to be more responsive to the diverse needs of the students. Additionally, teacher educators are recommended to revise and, in some cases, substantially change the structure of their teacher education programs to better support their teachers and help them cultivate a profound understanding of the importance of curriculum and its components for enhancing their teaching abilities. Further research on teacher education programs at schools and higher education can provide more information about the components of curricular knowledge emphasized in these programs and help policymakers and other stakeholders make better decisions about the content of teacher education programs. As stated by Villegas-Reimer (2003), factors such as the culture and values of a society, its perception of teachers and teaching, and the historical trajectory determine what type of education and professional development opportunities are provided for teachers. Therefore, institute

managers and teacher educators must re-evaluate their cultural beliefs and practices in order to change their current programs and select, design, or revise their programs to enhance teachers' curricular knowledge. In view of this, there is a need for reconceptualizing English language teacher education curricula, as has been emphasized by Kirkpatrick (2010) and Seidlhofer (2005). However, changes in teacher education programs, according to Bullock (2011), are very difficult because people and the culture of the workplace are quite resistant to change (Sarason, 1996). The success of professional development requires a "culture of support" from teachers, other educators, as well as national and international associations, and those who spearhead the field of education (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

This study probed into teacher education programs at work in English language institutes to identify the components of these programs and to specify which components of curricula knowledge were incorporated in these programs. Nevertheless, this study has a few limitations. The most important limitation lies in the fact that the study was restricted to the investigation of the content of the pre- and in-service teacher education programs of English language institutes; thus, the findings may be more relevant to institute managers, teacher educators, and teachers teaching in institutes and cannot be generalized to others groups, such as university teachers. Another limitation is the number of institutes the documents of which were investigated. In this study, teacher education programs of only 15 institutes were explored. As such, a more comprehensive study is needed to identify the status of the components of curricular knowledge in teacher education programs in more institutes across the country.

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